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THE GEORGE A. KESSLER "ART FANS."

These fans are not to be used by "my lady fair." They are ivory blades on which the most celebrated artists in the world have painted delicious bits of characteristic compositions. Evidently the artists, without a single exception, entered into the spirit of the scheme which the late Mr. Alexander Blumenstiel had in mind: to get individual color-autographs from the men he selected, as keynotes of their most cherished ideals. Thus he secured one hundred and five of these autographs, which he divided in five sections, spreading them in the shape of fans, and having the binding semicircle supplied by such artists as Vibert, Jean Paul Laurens, E. H. Blashfield, Maurice Leloir and Ludwig Knaus. They were mounted with an ornate and yet harmonious scroll design by Tiffany, after suggestions made by Raimondo de Madrazo.

I have called these blades color-autographs—and this was the thought which inspired Mr. Blumenstiel in collecting them, and was the only reason why he persuaded many of those who contributed their quota to undertake his commission. It was an original, unique thought to go to a famous artist and ask him, not for his signature only, but to place in a limited, designated space some ideal conception of what the artist had all his life been striving for. Thus we see that each individual proclaimed not alone his chirography, but his ambition, his aspiration, the quintessence of all the canvases he loved to paint most.

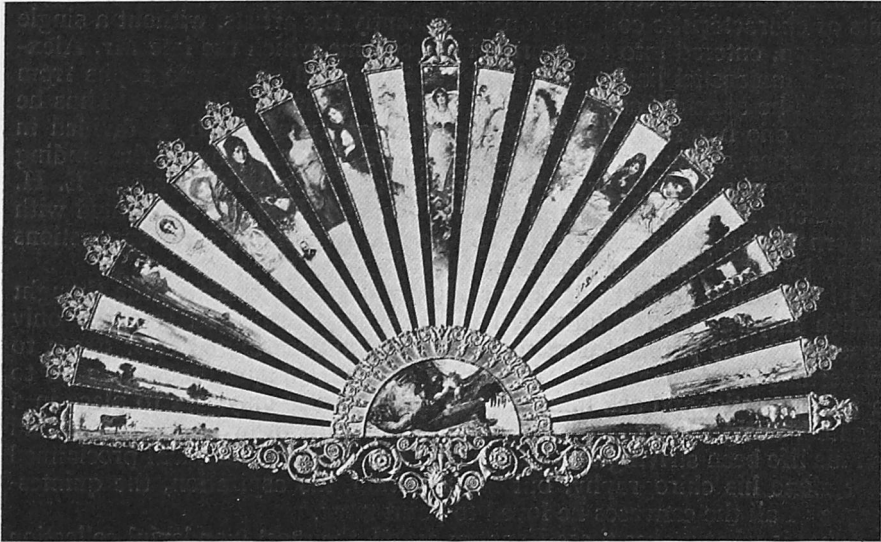
That is what makes these Fans, so called, the most wonderful collection of artistic souvenirs, for each blade is stamped with a master's individuality. It would have been a great pity had they been separated and scattered, for, as they are, they form a wondrous and astonishing contribution to contemporaneous art history.

Let us take the first Fan, which Mr. Blumenstiel showed me when it was completed in 1897, after three years of tireless efforts to get the artists interested in his idea—he found it easier work with the others, although ten years passed before all were completed. This first Fan alone cost him over ten thousand dollars to the artists, besides the untold amount of diplomacy and actual labor and expense required in traveling to secure his cherished treasures.

The first Fan has a semicircle by J. G. VIBERT, "Cardinal Fishing." It is the artist's best-known model—a red cardinal is his *cachet*. Taking the blades from left to right, we find CAZIN's little landscape that is always art, and shows the blithe, airy, truly spiritual way in which he gets far away from the pigment that is his instrument, and from the phenomena that are the objects of his expression—in a word, his ethereality. HENNER's reclining nude has all his charm of color and purity of expression. Nor would we know ROBIE except in his gorgeous floral pieces, and JOSEPH ISRAELS if he had not given us a charming little fisherman's child on the beach. Profound and deep as is his poetic sensibility, it is matched by temperate reason and sanity of mind, and the result is that in his tiniest sketch we find realism sublimed.

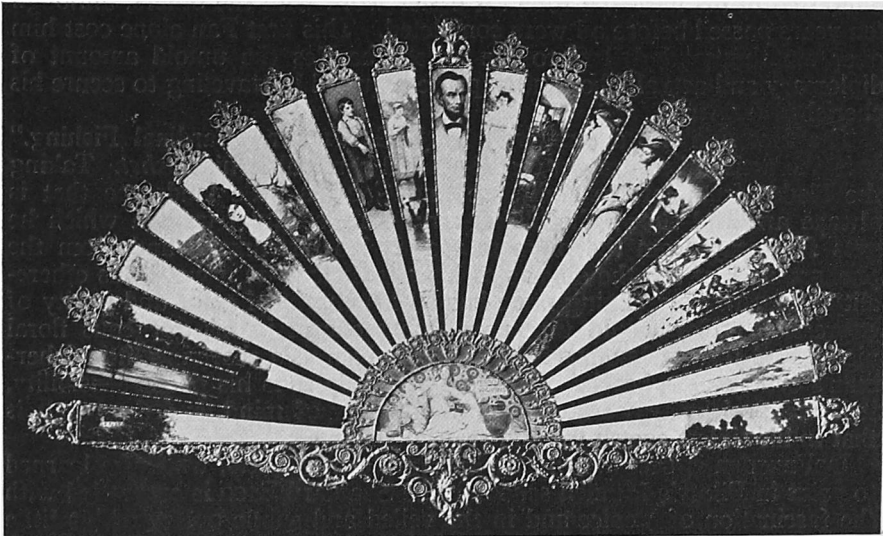
DEFREGGER is best known for his Tyrolean subjects, which he learned to paint in Piloty's Munich school. The Spaniard RICO is enthralled with the fascination of Venice and in the veiled and subtle poetry of his little glimpses of the "Queen of the Adriatic" he holds the spirit spellbound. When LEFEBVRE portrays his ideal figure of "La Vérité" the old maxim of Boileau comes to mind: "Nothing is beautiful but truth."

KNAUS is Germany's chief painter of genre. The genial humor, fine humanity and keen appreciation of childhood, as shown in this babe in its high chair, reveal his character. SALINAS in his bull-fighter proves to be neither rhetorical nor cold, but full of fire and the freshness of youth. CEDERSTROM selected one of his favorite ecclesiastics, and MADRAZO, who



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is Parisian in spirit and Spanish in verve and color, gives us a dainty coquettish figure. FLAMENG from the first showed a sensitiveness to form and a taste for solid and direct painting which always made his single figures types. HEBERT shows his esthetic capacities in a fancy head and GRUTZNER would not be known but for his jolly, rotund, monastic type. CHARTRAN, the famous portrait painter, indicates the secret of his success, which is refined decoration, by a decorative nude with sinuous curves and charming color. ROYBET's cavaliers and ladies are picturesque in themselves—they have brought him fame.

When we look at a landscape by HARPIGNIES we always recognize his clear, intelligible aim to move us with his own emotion. His tiniest bit is infused with his own soul. BENJAMIN CONSTANT shows a graceful nude. He was a great artist, one whose ideals were of the highest, whose spirit was noble and well balanced, who was indeed an apostle of the beautiful. His pictures are poetic visions, freed from all suggestion of things gross and sordid. MARIE DIETERLE loves the quiet life of the fields and portrays her bovine types with wonderful fidelity.

The industry, the strenuous exactness, the thoroughness, the impeccable draughtsmanship, the sharpness of relief of ALMA-TADEMA are all found in his Roman lady reclining. And J. L. GÉRÔME, the sculptor-painter, shows his favorite model in a magnificent Nubian lion.

Was I not right when I said that each artist has given the keynote to his most favorite work?

The second Fan has a fine semi-circle by JEAN PAUL LAURENS, "Prometheus Bound," in which the striking relief and perfect solidity is apparent with which he has endowed this mythological scene.

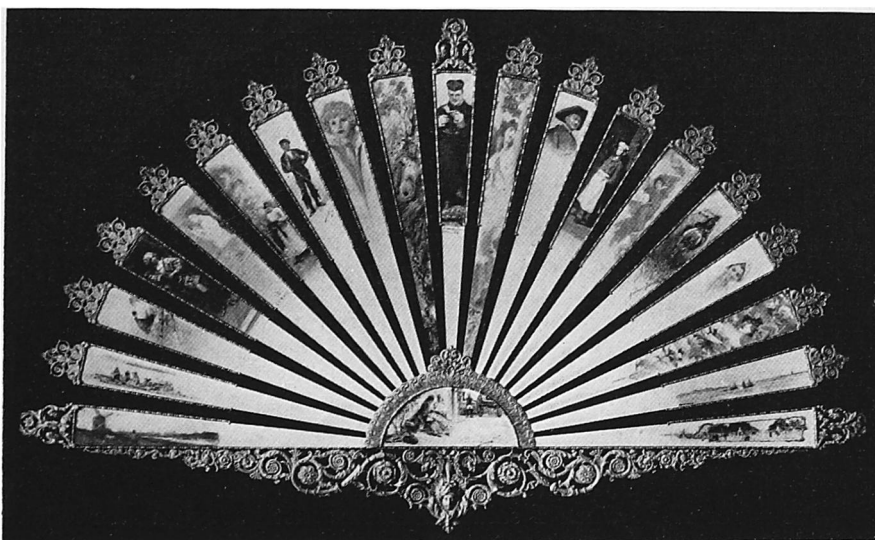
The first blade from the left is a landscape with cattle by A. MARAIS. There is a line from "*La Légende des Siècles*" which arises in my memory as I see his pictures; it is this: "*Une immense bonté tombait du firmament.*"

DELPY gives us a familiar river view; CARLTON WIGGINS, the model of the Holstein Bull in the Metropolitan Museum; and LEONARD OCHTMAN, having mastered the inner meaning of nature's poetry by a patient process of intellectual gestation, shows us one of the impressions out of the accumulated storehouse of his fecund mind.

JACQUET's female portraits have a strength, expressiveness and delicacy of tone that render them essentially pictures, as is shown in his miniature medallion. AMAN-JEAN, the famous decorative painter, has an expressive female head; and W. H. CHASE gives us a glimpse of the same model from which he must have painted his excellent "Carmencita." His signature is elaborated by a minute self-portrait, which is truly characteristic of this artist. H. RONDELS' female heads are as well known as Asti's. JOSÉ FRAPPA is naive and intimate in the glance he gives of the beauty peeping from under a hood. IRVING R. WILES shows a graceful lady; CONRAD KIESEL, one of his Italian peasants in costume as we see them on the stage. All the caprice of the nineteenth century with its charming and alluring grace is shown in MERSON's composition of Cupid pursuing a victim.

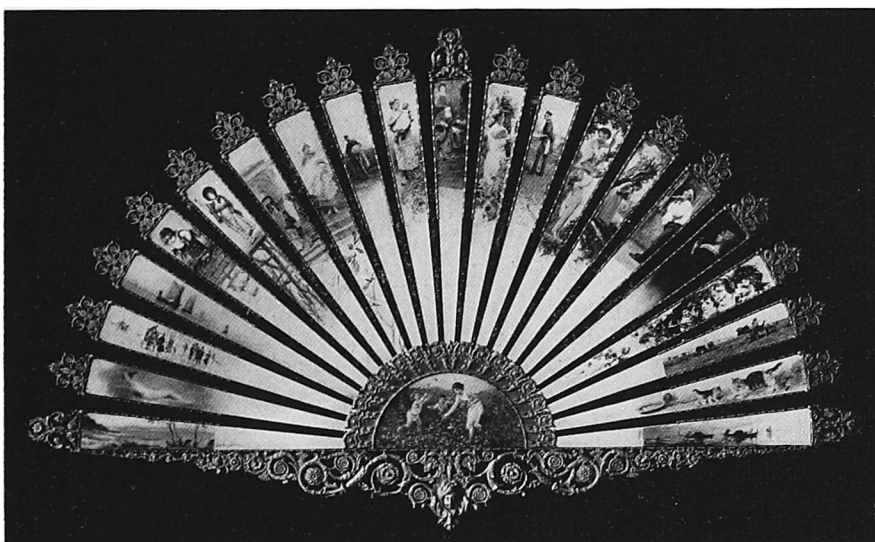
The quality of the art of GUSTAVE COURTOIS is wholly French. It is light of touch, graceful, easy, clear and self-poised. His portraits, and this must be one, may not portray much character; they are marked, one and all, with great charm, simplicity, harmonious effectiveness, perfect distinction and true refinement. DE SIEVOLLA and SOROLLA each show a Spanish lady; BLANCHE and LEROLLE, ideal heads; GUIGNARD, a sheepfold, and FRED. KOST, a horse and cart on the beach.

BOLDINI is well known through his portraits of prominent people and his charming figure pieces. This little bit, in which we see parasols on the



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beach hiding the people, is an acute observation that has a strain of elegance, a thrill of style, and good quality throughout.

The secret of animal painting, as disclosed by Gericault, Troyon and Barye, is a free and vigorous treatment of the subject, and it is amazing how masterly W. H. HOWE has given his cattle composition on such a small scale. It is one of the gems.

The third Fan is heralded by a classical figure in the semicircle by E. H. BLASHFIELD, and the first blade shows one of THAULOW'S well-known compositions, executed in his characteristic handling.

Who more perfectly than J. FRANCIS MURPHY has written the true psalm of life—delineated that eternal pulse which throbs within the heart of every being in its communion with nature? Every stroke of his brush has the exaltation of nature for its object.

GEORGE BOGERT shows a strong landscape; CARROL BECKWITH a fancy head; H. W. RANGER a Connecticut hillside, and LYNCH his usual bust of lovely woman.

The fine envelopment of air with which H. W. B. DAVIS surrounds his group of stag and fawns gives this beautiful blade a peculiar intensity of illusion and appearance of life. The decorative figure by SIDDONS MOWBRAY shows that neither in his art nor nature there is anything morbid—it exhales the perfume of joyous existence. Of course, J. G. BROWN has a bootblack asking for a "shine"; DEBAT-PONSAN a very atmospheric and well-drawn composition.

Few will perhaps realize the consummate scholarship which was required in the gathering of these fans—it is eminently signalized in the next blade, which shows a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. Few, again, know that FRANCIS B. CARPENTER—the loveable old man is now dead—was an intimate friend of Lincoln, and the late President always maintained that Carpenter was the only artist who understood him enough to do him justice, and Carpenter's portraits—he painted Lincoln twice or thrice—were the only ones he liked personally. When future likenesses of our first martyr President are painted this tiny portrait on this blade may be used for historical comparison.

HENRY GERVEX chose for the setting of his wonderland, out of nature's infinite variety, a "summer girl," sweet, fresh, reposeful, alluring and beautiful. TOBY ROSENTHAL shows the kernel of his work's excellence: how solidly he constructs his pictures and how admirably he puts them together with a degree of knowledge which genre painters often lack. F. B. CHURCH posed the model we are familiar with in his fantastic flamingo compositions. HUBERT HERKOMER has a lady with a picture-hat, and CARRIÈRE-BELLEUSE, of course, a gauzy ballet-dancer. TATTEGRAIN has an arquebusier who stepped out of one of his large historical paintings; MEYERSHEIM shows us an amusing monkey-and-parrot time, and both DESSAR and LEADER have facsimiles of the usual pictures they turn out. The R. C. MINOR has all the color of which the artist was a master, which is frank, warm and strong, without any false brilliancy or premature patina, but rich and true.

In the semicircle of the fourth Fan MAURICE LÉLOIR supplies figures for the little sunny stage in which he depicts a scene from "Manon Lescaut. This cunning draughtsman catches the quirks of look and gesture of these figures and touches them with the happiest art and insight.

All that Carlyle has told us of the dignity of labor, all that Wordsworth has sung of the beauty of rustic life and the poetry of common things lives again in the work of the Dutchman—and JACOB MARIS was *primus*. His little mill and riverside has the grandiose simplicity of arrangement, the true poetry of painting. E. BOUDIN shows a group of peasants, and the Munich artist, SEITZ a girl kneeling by the wayside that has a gentle, trustful spirit pervading. DETT'S Page is one of the supers of his royal

audience-chambers, and VIRGINIE DEMONT BRETON delineates a graceful mermaid. MUNIER, the pupil of Bouguereau, has a composition relating to his school; and JULES WORMS, the Parisian who lives in Spain, one of his well-known piccadors. GABRIEL MAX does not always paint the "Lion's Bride" or "The Last Token," figures combined with wild beasts. I saw at the Heinmann Gallery the other day a number of delightful cherub heads—his relaxation from serious painting. Naturally, he placed one on his blade. VOLLON has a mass of flowers arranged *en décoration*; and CASANOVA portrays the typical *prêtre*. BRIDGEMAN's female figure, "Youth," has delicacy of touch and lightness and exquisite harmony of color. VIBERT shows here one of his ecclesiastical personages, and JOSEPH BAIL a mischievous scullion. To ROBERT FLEURY mundane things are but symbols used to clothe the shadow of his dreams, to body forth a mood—hence the decorative figure he supplied.

KOWALSKI paints his figures and animals with great dash and in a vivid spirit, while DE CUVELLON, on the other hand, lingers lovingly on the youthful faces he delights to paint, which are so full of health, so beautiful as flowers, tempting as ripe fruit. ABBEMA's fancy head has also delicate and harmoniously blended tints and shows his superb mastery of technique. LOIR, the Parisian to the core, renders a vista of the Champs Élysées with the Arc de Triumph in the distance.

The fifth Fan semicircle, by LUDWIG KNAUS, "Children Gathering Flowers," exemplifies more fully what has been said about the blade which he painted. The miniature landscape by CAROLUS DURAN is the only exception to the rule which seems to have governed these subjects—and yet, mayhap, it is not, for this famous portrait painter delights to relax into dreamy communing with nature unadorned. FANTIN-LATOURE, in this reclining nude, shows that he uses his gentle and graceful talent with limpid purity, full of sentiment which never descends to silly sentimentality. Of BÉRAUD we could only expect a scene from the Boulevards, and from CLAYS, the Scheldt with its clumsy sailboats. KAULBACH gives a babe with its toys, and BOURGAINE, a dainty female figure. JOSÉ GALLEGOS portrays señoritas on the palace stairway, and KAEMMERER, a *bonne* carrying an infant, smothered in laces. BERNE-BELLECOURS, of course, a French officer, and RIDGWAY KNIGHT, a French peasant.

BENLLIURE is one of the foremost of the bright galaxy of artistic stars, and his fine color and spirited technique is shown in this Venetian Doge. MADELEINE LEMAIRE contributes an idyllic figure, and VON WERNER a German staff-officer. PERRAULT, the pupil of Picot, tickles our fancy with some *putti* at play. MOSLER has a German woman carrying fagots, and CHEVILLIARD, an old gentleman shaving. BUCHBINDER depicts a young maiden. JULIEN DUPRÉ, famous for his bright atmospheric effects, has a usual composition in which the human figure and cattle are combined, while the landscape is painted with consummate skill. EUGÈNE LAMBERT's playful kittens disport themselves here; while the last blade is by ZIEM, whose sunlight over the lagoon has all the subtle melodies of color, and more—the palpitating blaze of jewels.

Thus we see in these five "Art Fans" a wonderful display of the talent of the greatest artists. Combined in all their wealth of color they remind of the "amber carnation" of the Venetian masters. These are no *tours-de-force*, but bits in which the masters put themselves. Elegant and refined, they possess a charm which is not common. According to his temperament, each man made individual choice among the impressions which life brings to him. These blades, indeed, furnish the keynote to all their work.

Their present owner, Mr. George A. Kessler, is to be congratulated in the possession of a treasure which it will be impossible ever to duplicate, and for which, in time, museums will be clamoring to acquire.